

## CLAIMS

I claim:

1. A method of gripping and centering a food item in a toasting compartment of a toaster comprising the steps of:

- 5                   a) inserting the food item onto a carriage that is positioned in a receiving position within the toasting compartment;
- b) urging the carriage toward a toasting position; and
- c) depositing the food item onto a food cage such that gravitational forces exerted by the food item urge the food cage to grip and center the food item within the
- 10 toasting compartment.

2. The method of gripping and centering a food item in a toasting compartment of a toaster of claim 1 further comprising the step of:

- a) urging the carriage toward the food item at a conclusion of a toasting cycle to return the food item to the receiving position.

- 15                   3. The method of gripping and centering a food item in a toasting compartment of a toaster of claim 1 wherein at the conclusion of step (c) the carriage is positioned adjacent a base of the toaster, which initiates a heater to energize and heat the food item during a predetermined toasting cycle.